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A move that's not good for Hadi

KUALA LUMPUR: Analysts believe that the nomination of Pas vice-president Datuk Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man for the party president's post is a clear signal that a challenge will be mounted against party chief Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang in the party polls in June.

Analysts said they believed the nomination would not bode well for Hadi, who had not been challenged in 15 years.

Universiti Utara Malaysia political and international studies lecturer Md Shukri Shuib said the nomination, made by the Kota Baru Pas division on Monday, was akin to an outright rejection of Hadi's leadership.

"The move to nominate Tuan Ibrahim to take on Hadi for the presidency is a clear indication that there is a move to remove Hadi from the top post," Shukri told the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

He said the move was, however, not a surprise, as Hadi had become increasingly unpopular among Pas' so-called "progressive" leaders, after he stepped out of the Pakatan coalition's line on issues several times last year.

"The nomination from that division is an especially big blow to Hadi's conservative leadership.

"Kota Baru is the capital of Pas-led Kelantan, and is considered to be the

party's strongest bastion," Shukri said.

Another political observer, Associate Professor Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, said it was apparent that there were efforts to curtail Hadi's influence in the party.

On the nomination of Tuan Ibrahim for the president's post, Azizuddin said the vice-president was a leader who could be accepted by both the ulama and progressive factions.

Universiti Sains Malaysia's Associate Professor Sivamurugan Pandian, however, said it was too early to say if a direct challenge would be mounted against Hadi.

"Although there is a movement to try and bring Tuan Ibrahim to the fore, speculation of Hadi's position being threatened are premature," he said.

Pas Youth chief Suhaizan Kayat when contacted yesterday shared similar views, saying the nomination of Tuan Ibrahim did not signify a dent in Hadi's leadership of the party.

"It is still too early to say who will be the (next) Pas president. Party delegates still look at Hadi as the unifying symbol that keeps Pas leaders and members together.

"He will continue to serve as a father to us all," Suhaizan said.